

Christian Community

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Carrying Out The Emphasis On Christian Commitment

What One Congregation Is Doing About It

By R. G. Beck

Four years ago the leaders of First Evangelical and Reformed Church in Burlington, Iowa noted the success our congregations in Quincy, Illinois were having with a program of visitation and special emphasis Sundays designated as Loyalty Month. We had read descriptions of this program in promotional literature. However, it took the actual success story of the two churches to change this reading matter into well studied directions for a similar program in our own church. We were particularly intrigued with the necessity of using a lot of lay people to carry out the Loyalty Month visitation and program. The emphasis on various aspects of church activity in October, starting with World Wide Communion, including Layman's Sunday, Organization Sunday, Pledge Sunday, and Reformation Sunday provided more than enough latitude for inclusive participation. Each year since, this program has been re-

Instead of more advice on what to do for the fall Emphasis on Christian Commitment and Christian Community, we are featuring stories on what is actually being done by pastors and lay people.

The Reverend R. G. Beck, pastor of First Church, Burlington, is a member of Iowa Synod's committee on evangelism. He served for three years as vice-chairman of General Synod's special Committee on Vital Christian Living.

peated in our church with increasing success.

It was therefore a pleasant surprise to note, when we attended the February planning conference in Cincinnati, that the proposed program for local churches, projected by the Commissions on Evangelism, Stewardship and Christian Social Action, included many of the proven practices of Loyalty Month. It emphasized the important item of lay visitation of the entire membership. With very little adaptation the much desired change of emphasis for each Sunday could be used in almost any

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What One Synod Is Doing About It

By F. Nelsen Schlegel

Some 400 selected persons from churches in Mercersburg Synod came together on Sunday, May 22, at Trinity Church in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, for an afternoon and evening institute on this year's denominational emphasis, Christian Commitment and Christian Community. The Institute was sponsored by the synodical committees on Evangelism, Stewardship and Christian Social Action, Pastors Wilson W. Carvell, Glenn E. Schultz, and Robert W. Roschy, Chairmen.

Dr. Allan S. Meck, President of the Eastern Theological Seminary at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, gave the afternoon keynote address. This was followed by four concurrent conferences, at which resource leaders were Dr. Fred C. Schweinfurth, Dr. Huber F. Klemme, Reverend F. Nelsen Schlegel, and Reverend Paul E. Strauch. Dr. James W. Moyer, President of Mercersburg

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Leaders of the Conference and members of the committee which planned the Emphasis on Christian Commitment and Christian Community.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

FIELD WORK INCREASES

Our field secretaries, F. Nelsen Schlegel and Chester L. Marcus, have been kept very busy during the first half of this year. The growing demands for the services of the staff are indicative of the awareness on the part of our people of the significance of Christian social action in the life and program of the church.

Outstanding among recent trips were their visits to Lancaster and Southern Synods. While in Lancaster Synod, both spoke to Seminary and to Franklin and Marshall College students in various classes, preached in the churches of the synod, and addressed ministerial groups and local social action committees on Christian social action. In Southern Synod both also spoke to groups at Catawba College and led the chapel program on different days. Several institutes on applied Christianity were held in North Carolina, which sought to bring the Christian message to bear upon social relations in conferences dealing with "community problems" and "national problems" respectively. Both also preached in the churches and held conferences with small interested groups. Working as a team they reported many rewarding experiences on the field.

In addition to the team work mentioned above each made several trips alone. Mr. Marcus visited churches in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, and Washington, D. C. He has just returned from a trip to Nebraska, Pacific Northwest and California Synods, where he spoke in churches in Laramie, Wyoming; Denver, Colorado; Tacoma, Seattle, and Toppenish, Washington. He addressed the meeting of Pacific Northwest Synod in Portland, spoke in San Francisco, and spent several days in Los Angeles meeting with churches and with local Christian social action committees.

Mr. Schlegel's itinerary since January took him to a good number of churches in Lehigh, Lancaster, Southern, Rocky Mountain and Nebraska Synods.

BUFFALO INSTITUTE LOOKS AT VIOLENCE

Efforts are being made in a number of places to hold institutes on Christian Social Action in which both Evangelical and Reformed and Congregational Christian people can participate. Zion Church in Buffalo, New York, was the scene of such an institute on May 1, with leaders from the Christian Social

Action Committee of the Congregational Christian Churches of Western New York Association cooperating with our West New York Synod's committee in sponsoring the venture.

The theme of the institute was "Christians Living in a World of Violence". At an afternoon session a panel discussion was held, with the following participants and subjects: Dr. Gordon J. Klopf, Dean of Students at Buffalo State Teachers' College, speaking on "Violence in World Relationships"; Dr. Huber F. Klemme, Executive Secretary of the Commission on Christian Social Action, "Violence in National Relationships"; Dr. Robert E. Albright, Head of Graduate Studies, Buffalo State Teachers' College, "Violence in Community Relationships"; and Dr. Albert V. Cutter, Psychiatrist and Head of the Buffalo Guidance Center, "Violence in the Family." After the panel presentation smaller groups were formed so that all persons present might have opportunity to discuss the points presented by the panel leaders.

An evening worship service concluded the day's institute. It was led by Reverend Arthur E. Antal, liturgist, and Dr. Ralph W. Loew, pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, who preached on "The Individual in a World of Violence." A literature table, featuring an exhibit prepared by the Public Library of Buffalo and Erie County, presented pertinent reading and study material on the topic.

This was an attempt on the part of the two denominational social action committees to present the resources available for meeting some of the real social issues that confront our people. In view of the enthusiastic response of the participants the same sort of conference will probably be presented again.

RURAL GROUPS SHOW INTEREST IN U. N.

During his itinerary in Nebraska Synod recently Field Secretary Schlegel had occasion at five meetings to use a United Nations Film which shows the work of two U N technical assistance agencies, WHO and FAO in Afghanistan, one of the world's several underdeveloped countries. Audiences were made up almost entirely of Nebraska farmers, all of whom were very much interested in the constructive efforts at helping people help themselves which are depicted in the film.

There are many short U N films

which go far in showing the ways in which American participation in the United Nations makes possible the continuation of humanitarian projects such as missionaries were often instrumental in starting in what are still underdeveloped lands.

CHURCH PROMOTES FARM OWNERSHIP

A good step toward helping Evangelical and Reformed people in rural areas has been taken by a new committee in the West Blue Church near Milford, Nebraska, the Reverend August L. Brueggemann, pastor. When farm land is for rent or sale in this farming community members of the church committee try to find Evangelical and Reformed farmers who can qualify to buy the land, or take a long-time lease on it. Bankers and real estate dealers are also contacted by the committee, to provide information concerning properties under their control.

The committee declares that it is not going "into the real estate business." But it wants to help Evangelical and Reformed families with agricultural interests and skills to locate good properties in the rich farming country around Milford. And it feels that church groups must cooperate in efforts to develop real concern for the maintenance of family farms in agricultural areas.

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED

The St. Louis County Social Action Group celebrated the completion of its first year of activity among the 19 Evangelical and Reformed Churches of St. Louis County, with a special service on April 22 in the Calvary Church at Overland, Missouri. Reverend F. Nelsen Schlegel, Field Secretary for the Commission on Christian Social Action, preached the sermon. Mrs. Marie McCollough, a member of the Kirkwood Church and one of the founders of the Group, was installed as new president. Other officers installed at this service were: Mrs. Jean Niemeier, Vice-President; Mrs. Henrietta Schuette, Secretary; Mrs. Henrietta Biener, Treasurer; and Mrs. Alberta Konneman, Corresponding Secretary.

This is a unique organization. Begun a year ago the Group has sponsored a series of discussions pertaining to various aspects of Christian citizenship among the nineteen churches of St. Louis County (see the February, 1955, issue of CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, page 2). It seeks to bring together leaders of the several congregations to plan ways by which the churches of the county can work together on matters of social concern.

CARRYING OUT THE EMPHASIS

In a Congregation

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church. We could see a real enrichment in changing our program in October, 1955 from a rather complete emphasis on our local situation to include the larger denominational responsibilities. This time we were not going to wait for brothers Schroedel and Ebeling of Quincy to prove out the program!

As we reread the manual "Commitment for Christian Living" which detailed this united program our enthusiasm increased. Now we were clearly picturing how we would carry out the program in our local situation in Burlington, Iowa. We further concluded that this program was so excellent that it deserved diligent preparation and generous financial undergirding. Indeed, we thought, it would be helpful to use whatever "outside" talent we could obtain, since during the past four years we had used and re-used our local leaders exclusively.

Letters were sent out immediately to denominational leaders inviting them to come to Burlington and preach on the designated Sunday morning and lead in a discussion meeting in the evening. We were thrilled when Dr. Allen Wehrli of Eden Seminary wrote that he would be our leader for World Wide Communion Sunday. Dr. Fred Schweinfurth, Executive Secretary of the Commission on Evangelism accepted our invitation to be the leader on October 9th—Evangelism Sunday. Mr. Henry J. Schlundt, one of our denomination's outstanding lay leaders wrote he would come to us for October 16th, Stewardship Sunday. The chairman of the Commission on Christian Social Action, Dr. Elmer Arndt, agreed to help us on October 23 and provide that emphasis. The very able Reverend John L. Schmidt of St. Louis will take the important task of directing our thoughts on October 30th, Reformation Sunday.

NEW FILMS ON THREATS TO TEACHERS' FREEDOM

Two new sound motion pictures of special interest to social action groups have only recently been prepared. One of them, *THE SOUND OF A STONE*, has been cleared for use on TV programs. It is a Methodist church production emphasizing the moral and spiritual foundations under our civil liberties, and showing the damage which can be done to persons and communities by false rumors. It is a 26 minute film.

In a Synod

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Synod, and Dr. Howard Schley Fox, pastor of Trinity Church, also had part in the program.

Concluding the Institute was a challenging address by the President of the church, Dr. James E. Wagner, who also led the assembly in a service of dedication.

It is believed that the 400 people who attended received a good understanding of the scope of the denominational emphasis, and that they will give much help in carrying out the suggested program in their several churches.

Plans are being made for Sunday evening meetings to supplement the morning message.

The board members have concluded that this program of "Commitment for Christian Living" is so excellent that it deserves adequate financial support. Materials are being gathered for three mailings prior to the month of October. Plans have been made for a dinner meeting at which 200 lay people will be instructed and prepared to visit every home in the congregation. Each individual member will be personally invited and challenged to attend every service and meeting during the month. A weekly letter related to the special Sunday will be mailed five days before the service. Each letter will contain such helpful materials regarding Evangelism, Stewardship, and Social Action as are available.

Our lay leaders are planning to carry out this program with such thoroughness that one observed: "We have obtained such an excellent array of talent and are making such diligent plans that we could well serve in this instance as a test for similar programs." We already feel assured that we are about to experience one of the greatest inspirational blessings ever to come to our church.

Action Notes

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Senate, which had voted the full \$8 million requested by the President for UN Technical Assistance, and the House which had cut the request in half, compromised on \$6,500,000 for the first half of 1955. Separate legislation will be required to enable us to assume our 1956 obligations, as suggested in this column in our April issue.

Within recent weeks, Senators H. Alexander Smith and Paul H. Douglas made vigorous speeches in support of technical assistance. Members of the Commission staff wrote to commend them. Both letters were personally acknowledged. Senator Douglas' reply may serve to remind us of our responsibility and encourage us in discharging it: "Thank you for your letter, and I am glad you liked what I had to say on Point Four. Only the church people can put this program across."

"INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION"

President Eisenhower has announced that he will issue an Executive Order transferring the functions of the Foreign Operations Administration, due to terminate on June 30, to the State Department. Excepted are certain military aspects which go to Defense. The new name for the frequently transferred agency will be International Cooperation Administration.

On April 20th Mr. Eisenhower also sent to Congress his recommendation that \$3,530,000,000 be made available for mutual security programs during the fiscal year beginning June 30, 1955. \$172 million out of a total economic aid item of \$172,500,000 is for technical cooperation.

SENATOR BRICKER AGAIN

Senator Bricker has introduced a modified version of his previous proposal to amend the Constitution by limiting the power of the Executive in international affairs. Although recommending that the UN be shorn of its powers of enforcement in security matters, he stoutly denies that he is hostile to the UN!

HOUSING AMENDMENTS

Senator Sparkman and Congressman Spence, of the Banking and Currency committee of the two houses of Congress, "by request" introduced S. 1800 and H.R. 5827, known as the Housing Amendments of 1955, embodying the Administration's housing proposals. These would over a two-year period provide 70,000 additional low-rent public housing units, increase FHA mort-

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Action Notes

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gage insurance authorization, and extend for five years the FHA home modernization and repair program. According to Lee F. Johnson of the National Housing Conference, the proposed Amendments remove many stultifying restrictions (see *Christian Community* for May), but fall far short of immediate public housing needs.

SUPREME COURT ORDERS

On May 31 the Supreme Court handed down its long awaited order covering the implementation of the public school decision. While setting no deadline for compliance, the Court placed squarely upon local officials and local federal courts the responsibility for ending all racial segregation as soon as practicable. This puts it up to all citizens—Christian citizens not least of all—to see that such steps are taken immediately, rapidly, and in good faith.

RESERVE PLAN

When the House of Representatives adopted Congressman Adam Clayton Powell's amendment prohibiting assignment of six-month Reservists to State Guards which practice segregation, Chairman Vinson and many other Congressmen lost their enthusiasm for the Reserve Plan bill, H.R. 5297. At the time of writing, it is not certain whether it will stay shelved or reappear without making provision for such assignments.

THE 1955 UNITED NATIONS — WORLD ORDER SEMINAR will be held in New York, October 10 to 12. Sessions are scheduled at Riverside Church on Monday; UN Headquarters on Tuesday; Union Theological Seminary on Wednesday. Further information may be secured from the office of the Commission.



Speaking of Books

What can a city church do when its neighborhood changes? When its members move away? How can it reach the new people who come into its community? Are there any racially inclusive congregations? What kinds of programs work in the inner city?

In *The Church Serves the Changing City* (Harper, \$3.50), written for the Department of the Urban Church with the cooperation of the Committee on Field Research of the National Council of Churches, Dr. Ross W. Sanderson has had in mind the above questions—asked again and again by pastors in urban parishes. So he has given us case studies of eight types of ministry presently in operation.

That this is information of prime importance for pastors—and responsible lay leaders—goes without saying, and the author's long record of study and service on behalf of the urban church assures us of the wisdom of his observations.

Dr. Sanderson makes it very clear that the church in the changing city must serve the community in terms of the community's real needs, and that inclusiveness—social, economic, vocational, ethnic—is imperative. The experience of Lutherans with racial integration, incidentally, refutes those in our own fellowship who declare that "the Negro" would not find our church life "congenial."

EVANSTON HAS SPOKEN—IT'S YOUR TURN NOW

Some weeks ago every pastor of an Evangelical and Reformed church received from the office of the President of the Church a copy of the booklet, *Evanston Speaks*. This contains the Message and the Sectional Reports of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches which were received by the Assembly and commended to the member churches for study and action with the request that they report to the World Council as to the results of their study and action.

The Division of Christian Life and Work of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. was given the responsibility of aiding and guiding the United States member churches in this process of study, action, and report. At its initiative there has been prepared an excellent study guide, entitled *Every Church and Evanston*, containing not only questions for study and discussion but suggestions for techniques and procedures which might be used in making group exploration more meaningful and vital.

The booklet embodies one feature which will enable the congregation, adult class, study group, youth fellowship, Guild, or Brotherhood to report its reactions and opinions. The last eight pages are perforated, containing report forms on the successive chapters of the book, which can be filled in, detached, and mailed to the responsible agency of the denomination, to be taken

into consideration when the denomination makes its corporate report to the World Council.

The suggestion that such a device be incorporated was initiated by the Evangelical and Reformed Church. In a meeting dealing with the question of the allocation of responsibility for following up the Assembly's action, there was a firm conviction that local congregations had a part to play not only in studying the great statements which came from Evanston but also in helping to formulate the official responses to these statements. The proposal of a report form was cordially welcomed and perfected by the National Council's committee in preparing the study guide.

Copies of *Every Church and Evanston* may be secured from the Commission on Christian Social Action at 50 cents each; 12 to 24, 45 cents each; 25 or more, 40 cents. Additional copies of *Evanston Speaks* may be secured from the Commission on Evangelism at 50 cents.

Evangelical and Reformed church groups should send their reports to the office of the Administrative Assistant to the President, the Reverend Dr. Sheldon E. Mackey, 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia 2, Pa., who will distribute them to the appropriate agencies—in the case of Section Two to the Commission on Evangelism, and in the case of Sections III, IV, V, and VI to the Commission on Christian Social Action.